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DATE: MAY 26, 2009

TO: Department of Justice, Registration Unit

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FROM: Qorvis Communications, LLC. (202) 496-1000

PAGE COUNT: 3 – (Including Cover Page)

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SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC



May, 19, 2009

Foreign Relations

GCC Interior Ministers hold 10th Consultative Meeting

The Ministers of Interior of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states gathered in Riyadh on March 12 to hold their 10th Consultative Meeting. Addressing the gathering, Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef expressed concern over the recent increase in violence in Iraq and urged neighboring countries to take positive action to promote Iraqi unity and stability. The security of the entire region, he warned, may be at stake. Afterwards, Prince Nayef characterized the GCC interior ministers' deliberations as "successful," claiming that their desired goals had been attained. Furthermore, he confirmed that Saudi security forces have successfully defeated deviant groups inside the Kingdom. "Thanks to Allah Almighty, we have attained great success in this respect," he remarked. Regarding Saudi detainees in Guantanamo, Prince Nayef said, "We are proceeding ahead on these issues and we hope it will not take a long time. At the same time, we also hope that there will be no Saudi detainee remaining."

International Understanding Council welcomes King's initiatives

The Council for International Understanding concluded its 27th session on May 13 at the King Abdullah Economic City in Rabigh. In a final statement, the Council stressed the importance of intercultural dialogue and warned that the Middle East will remain a hub for conflict unless real peace is achieved between Israel and its neighbors. "Here, the importance of the [Arab Peace initiative] the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah launched in 2002 is shown," the statement added. The Council highlighted the Kingdom's status as one of the few moderate countries in the region and welcomed the reform proposals put forth by King Abdullah. In particular, it praised his Interfaith Dialogue initiative that resulted in international conferences in Spain and New York last year.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S.

King receives U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan

King Abdullah received U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard Holbrooke at the Royal Court at Al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh on May 17. During the audience, Ambassador Holbrooke conveyed the greetings of President Barack Obama. The meeting was attended by a number of officials, including Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel A. Al-Jubeir and Charge d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh David Randel. Ambassador Holbrooke and his delegation also met with Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz to discuss

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regional and international developments.

SAUDI ARABIA

Second conference on domestic violence held in Riyadh

The second national experts' forum on violence against women and children was held in Riyadh on May 16. The conference, held under the auspices of Princess Adela bint Abdullah and organized by the National Family Safety Program and the Medical Affairs Department at the National Guard, sought to bring together the private and public sectors in the fight against domestic violence. Minister of Justice Mohammed Al-Eissa addressed the meeting. At the first forum held last May, participants concluded that Islam does not condone abuse of women and children and issued 22 recommendations to address the issue.

FOREIGN AID

Lebanese leader lays foundation stone for Saudi-funded highway

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Al-Siniora laid the foundation stone for Lebanon's Arab highway road, a project funded by the Saudi government, the Saudi Development Fund (SDF) and the OPEC Fund, during a May 14 ceremony in Beirut. A total of \$152 million was contributed for the road's construction.

Sixteen truckloads of Saudi aid arrive in Gaza

In line with the directives of Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, the General Supervisor of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Campaign for the Relief of the Palestinian People in Gaza, 16 trucks loaded with foodstuffs have entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing. The shipment has been handed over to the Palestinian Red Crescent.



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